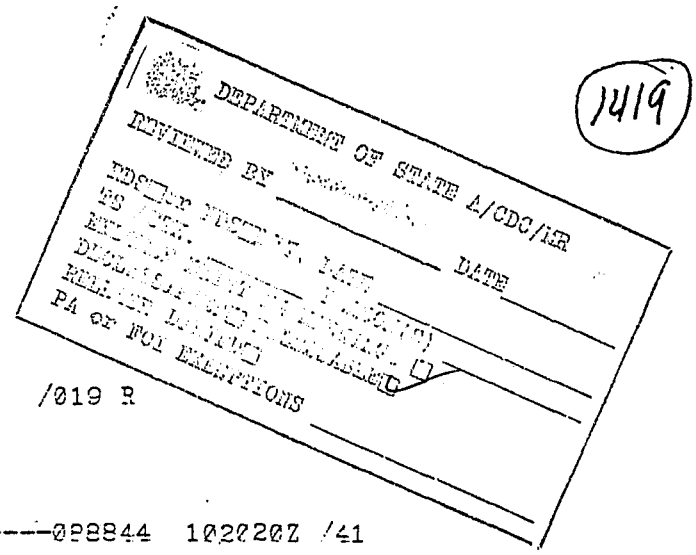

1419

SHEAFFER JEANNE M
78 STATE 311999 9

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED
PAGE 01 STATE 311999
ORIGIN CA-01
INFO OCT-01 ARA-15 ISO-00 PA-02 /019 R
DRAFTED BY CA:PKMURPHY:VAB
APPROVED BY CA:HEORAN
DESIRED DISTRIBUTION
PA:KIMBERLY KING
----------0?8844 102020Z /41

R 1316292 DEC 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
UNCLAS STATE 311999
E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: GY
SUBJECT: PRESS COMMENT
1. THERE FOLLOWS THE TEXT OF AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED QUOTE DON'T KNOCK STATE UNQUOTE WHICH WAS PUBLISHED DECEMBER 8, 1978, IN THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
2. QUOTE: THE MASS SUICIDE IN GUYANA MAY HAVE BEEN INCOMPREHENSIBLE, BUT SOME PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN SCURRYING AROUND TRYING TO FIT THE DISASTER INTO THE ORDINARY CATEGORIES OF AMERICAN POLITICS. THEY'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO BLAME, AND THE MOST READILY AVAILABLE TARGET TURNS OUT TO BE THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT.
CONGRESSMAN PHILIP CRANE HAS WEIGHED IN FOR "THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER," ASKING THE DEPARTMENT WHY IT'S USING PUBLIC MONEY TO BRING THE BODIES HOME. OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES ARE CRITICIZING STATE'S BEHAVIOR BEFORE THE EVENT AND ACCUSING OUR DIPLOMATS OF VARYING DEGREES OF IGNORANCE,
UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED
PAGE 02 STATE 311999
LAXNESS AND CORRUPTION.
LAWYERS FOR A GROUP OF PEOPLES TEMPLE DEFECTORS HAVE REVEALED THAT THEY EXPLICITLY WARNED STATE ABOUT THE DANGER TO AMERICAN LIVES IN GEORGETOWN. THEY PRODUCED AFFIDAVITS ATTESTING THAT THE REVEREND JIM JONES WAS "SICK" AND PLOTTING "MASS SUICIDE FOR SOCIALISM." TRUE, THEY ADMIT, THE STATE DEPARTMENT DID LODGE A FORMAL PROTEST WITH THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT IN A LEGAL DISPUTE BETWEEN JONES AND A DEFECTOR OVER CUSTODY OF A SIX-YEAR-OLD CHILD. BUT THE LAWYERS COMPLAIN THAT THE DEPARTMENT NEVER PROPERLY FOLLOWED THROUGH ON THE ACTION.
THERE'S ANOTHER SET OF COMPLAINTS ON THE RECORD NOW FROM REPRESENTATIVE LEO RYAN'S LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL, WHO ACCOMPANIED THE LATE CONGRESSMAN ON HIS ILL-FATED TRIP TO GUYANA. SHE SAYS THAT THE DEPARTMENT NEVER SUFFICIENTLY WARNED THE PARTY ABOUT THE DANGER OF VIOLENCE THAT AWAITED AT JONESTOWN. SHE ASSERTS THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL ON THE SCENE IN GUYANA WERE MUCH TOO "BLASE" ABOUT REP. RYAN'S INVESTIGATION, AND THAT THEY WERE MIFFED

SHEAFFER JEANNE M
78 STATE 311999

UNCLASSIFIED

ABOUT ALL THE NEWSMEN THAT THE CONGRESSMAN BROUGHT ALONG. ONE REPORT OUT OF JONESTOWN FURTHER SAYS THERE'S EVIDENCE FROM JONES'S PERSONAL PAPERS THAT SOME PEOPLE IN THE AMERICAN EMBASSY ACTUALLY MAINTAINED A CLOSE AND HELPFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CULT. ONE OFFICIAL, IT SAYS, KEPT JONES INFORMED ABOUT LEGAL ATTACKS ON THE PEOPLES' TEMPLE AND TRIED TO DISCOURAGE ATTEMPTS BY AT LEAST ONE DEFECTOR TO TAKE HER CASE TO THE PRESS.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS NOW FACED WITH THE JOB OF DEFENDING

UNCLASSIFIED

ITSELF AND ITS GUYANA STAFF FROM PRESS AND CONGRESSIONAL ATTACKS. THEY'VE POINTED OUT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE AMERICAN CONSULAR OFFICIAL NOW BEING CRITICIZED FOR BEING SOFT ON JONESTOWN ACTUALLY GOT HIMSELF INTO SOME TROUBLE FOR INSISTING SO STRONGLY THAT THE GUYANESE POLICE INVESTIGATE THE PLACE. BUT STATE IS LIKELY TO HAVE A ROUGH TIME OF IT.

WE'VE SAID PLENTY ON THIS PAGE ABOUT THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT. IT'S TRUE THAT ITS PERSONNEL IN THE FIELD MAY DEVELOP A TASTE FOR GETTING ALONG IN WHATEVER PLACE THEY'VE LANDED IN, AND SO TEND TO PAINT THEIR ENVIRONMENT IN FRIENDLY COLORS THAT ANYONE MAKING FOREIGN POLICY SHOULD TREAT WITH A BIT OF SKEPTICISM. BUT THIS TIME THE CRITICS ARE ACCUSING THE DEPARTMENT OF NEGLIGENCE FOR NOT HAVING SEEN SOMETHING THAT IN FACT NONE OF US COULD HAVE IMAGINED.

IF STATE HAD BEHAVED DIFFERENTLY, YOU CAN BE SURE THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN HOWLS ABOUT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S HARRASSMENT OF THE RELIGIOUSLY PECULIAR. UNLESS SOME RADICALLY DIFFERENT EVIDENCE EMERGES NOW ABOUT STATE DEPARTMENT BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THE JONES CULT, WE WISH THE CRITICS WOULD RESTRAIN THEMSELVES A BIT AND KEEP FROM ADDING TO THE UGLINESS OF THIS WHOLE EPISODE. CHRISTOPHER

UNCLASSIFIED